



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Winding, broad glaciated dale with complex topography and underlying geology; valley form is undefined and lacks unity.
- Sense of openness and light (in comparison to Mid Wharfedale) resulting from breadth of valley; the influence of limestone in wall building and vegetation cover; the lower height of enclosing uplands and reducing influence of dark gritstone moors.
- Distinctive nationally important conical grass hills (limestone reef knolls) interspersed with a marked pattern of strip lynchets contribute to a unique landscape on Thorpe Fell sides.
- Thorpe Fell side is strongly textured by the pattern of unwooded gills; on the eastern dale side trees line well-developed rocky gills.
- The river, often hidden from view, alternates between cutting a deep course fringed by cliffs and steep wooded banks and meandering across a broad open flood plain.
- Traditional nucleated gritstone villages, centred on the river, its tributaries and bridging points are marred in places by suburban style expansion.
- The varied pattern of predominately limestone walls is diluted in many cases by the complexity of the topography; barns are occasional features.
- Visitor facilities including campsites and car parks and occasional inappropriate development within open countryside, including suburban style houses, masts, former railway structures and electricity poles, detract from character.
- Woodlands are more prevalent moving north with a significant area of woodland at Grass Wood; occasional small enclosed copses occur in field corners where trees grow together into a characteristic domed shape.
- Dark coniferous plantations and exotic conifers planted in association with properties detract.
- Hay meadows are scattered on the valley floor and sides particularly in the Grassington area.
- Quarries are significant detractors within this part of the dale.
- Limestone pavements occur in the north of the character area, particularly within and above Grass Wood and on the edge of Malham Moor.

